

BLM Nevada RAC Recreation Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

November 12, 2008

Gold Coast Casino

Las Vegas, Nevada

In Attendance

Chairperson:	Amy Lueders	BLM, Associate State Director
Vice-Chairperson:	Doran Sanchez	BLM, Nevada Chief of Communications
Forest Service Official:	Stephanie Phillips	Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Notetaker :	Olivia Sierra	BLM, Southern Nevada District Office

Participants	
Name	Affiliation
Barb Keleher	BLM, Nevada State Office, ORP
Will Roger Peterson	SFWGB RAC – Recreation (Dispersed)
Ken Miller	BLM, Elko Field Office, Field Manager
Doran Sanchez	BLM, Nevada Chief of Communications
Mary Jo Rugwell	BLM, Southern NV District Office, District Manager
John Hiatt	MOSO RAC – Wildlife
Claire Toomey	MOSO RAC – Permitted Recreation
Sharlet Berentsen	Rec. RAC
Sheri Eklund Brown	NEGB RAC – Elected Official
Mark Tanaka-Sanders	BLM, Southern NV District Office, RRCNCA Manager
Jackson Ramsey	RRCIA / SNC
Amy Lueders	BLM, Associate State Director
Kirsten Cannon	BLM, Southern NV District Office, PAO
Joshua Simpson	FS, Ely District Office – NRS (Recreation)
Scott Lamoreux	FS, Humboldt-Toiyabe Ntl Forest – Landscape Architect
Stephanie Phillips	FS, Humboldt-Toiyabe Ntl Forest – Deputy Forest Sup.
Skip Canfield	MOSO RAC – State Agency
Kitty Benzar	Western Slope No Fee Coalition
Brian Benzar	Western Slope No Fee Coalition
Vince Garcia	NEGB RAC Chairperson, Native American Tribes
Elise McAllister	MOSO RAC – Recreation (Dispersed)
Chris Hanefeld	BLM, Ely District Office, PAO
Rochelle Ocava	BLM, Nevada State Office, PAO
Olivia Sierra	BLM, Southern NV District Office, Staff Assistant

Welcome and Introductions

Amy Lueders introduced herself, welcomed the Subcommittee members and other participants to the meeting. She went over housekeeping points and introduced Stephanie Phillips, Deputy Forest Supervisor for Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. Each person was asked to introduce themselves and inform everyone which agency/group they were affiliated with.

The agenda was introduced and reviewed by the team.

Review Protocol and Guidelines

Barb Keleher introduced herself and led the discussion on the Subcommittee's Protocol document:

- Subcommittee members from each RAC will present the proposed recommendation to their respective RACs at their RAC's individual meeting on Friday
- The team was asked to provide the recommendations dealing with their specific geographic area
- Protocol was explained

Scott Lamoreux introduced himself to the team and further explained the Nevada Recreation Subcommittee Guidelines for Recreation Fee Proposals

The topics addressed were:

1) Criteria

- Demonstrate how the proposal complies with Recreation Enhancement Act (REA)
- Criteria for amenity fees
- Expanded amenity fees, or special permit fees as applicable

2) Business Plan

- Document the business rationale, financial analysis, and justification for the fee proposal. The following items should be addressed by the business plan:
 - Background about the recreation site and public usage
 - Project Description
 - Business Rationale and Justification for the Proposed Fee
 - Financial Analysis
 - Market Assessment
 - Social/Economic Impacts
 - NO action alternative

3) Public Participation

- Identify organized recreational groups and their comments
- Public involvement includes:
 - Federal Register
 - Posting a Notice on Sites and sending News Releases
 - Contacting the media
 - Posting information on agency websites
 - Sending releases to interested parties (This includes the RACs, Recreation Subcommittee members, local governments and Congressional delegation)

The Checklist for REA Criteria was presented and further explained:

Amenities & Requirements:

- Standard Amenity:
 - Permanent Toilet
 - Permanent Trash
 - Picnic Table
 - Parking Area
 - Interpretive Sign, Exhibit or Kiosk
 - Security Services
- Requirement
 - Efficient collection of fees
- Characteristics of a Standard Amenity Fee Site
 - Substantial Federal Investment
 - Significant Recreation Opportunity
- Expanded Amenity
 - Developed Campgrounds
 - Tent or trailer space
 - Picnic Tables
 - Drinking Water
 - Access roads
 - Fee collection services
 - Reasonable visitor protection
 - Refuse containers
 - Toilet facilities
 - Simple devices for containing a campfire
- Highly developed boat launch
 - Mechanical or hydraulic boat lifts or facilities
 - Multi-lane paved ramps

- Paved parking
 - Toilet facilities
 - Lighting for parking and ramp use;
 - Security services
 - Changing rooms
 - Boarding floats or docks
 - Mooring floats/buoys, moorage docks
 - Loading ramps
 - Fish cleaning stations
 - Picnic area
 - Refuse containers
 - Play ground areas
- Highly developed swimming area
 - Bathhouse with showers and flush toilets
 - Refuse containers
 - Picnic areas
 - Paved parking
 - Attendants including lifeguards
 - Floats/buoys, encompassing the swimming area
 - Swimming deck
 - Expanded other

Presentation on Proposed Public Involvement Process for Potential Fee Adjustment at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

Mary Jo Rugwell, District Manager of the Southern Nevada District Office introduced Mark Tanaka-Sanders; new manager at Red Rock; Mark came to the BLM from the NPS in Hawaii.

Mary Jo introduced this topic and provided a PowerPoint presentation.

Topics discussed:

- Overview of process
- Current status
- Public involvement

Mary Jo explained the timeline for the Potential Fee Adjustment and that the BLM is currently drafting a Business plan.

TIMELINE

- Initial presentation to Recreation Subcommittee – November 2008
- Draft Business Plan and fee proposal scheduled for January 2009
- Public Comment Period – June 2009
- Public Comments incorporated into final business plan and proposal – August 2009
- Business Plan reviewed/approved by Nevada State Office and Washington Office - September /October 2009
- Recreation Subcommittee presentation – 2009
- Implementation January – 2010

Outreach vehicles were presented:

- Web site (BLM, Red Rock Canyon Interpretive Association (RRCIA) and Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FORRC)
- News release
- Posters
- Flyers
- Newsletter articles
- Letters to interested parties
- Public meetings (2 meetings will be hosted in Las Vegas)
- Feedback options will be available to the public

Q & A

Mary Jo noted Red Rock has been able to operate on the appropriated funds and fees collected. \$2.5 million dollars were collected last year; expenditures were at \$2.4 million dollars last year. Deferred maintenance was discussed and explained. Appropriated funds account for 40% of the budget.

Appropriated funds are dependent on the situation nation and worldwide. Emergency fee procedure was discussed. Currently there is no such procedure.

Mary Jo explained, the BLM would not be able to operate Red Rock without the aid of FORRC and RRCIA. Operating Red Rock without these two organizations would be very difficult; the costs would be exorbitant.

Collecting fees for different user groups was brought up. It was noted some groups are charged every time they utilize the scenic loop for example and not the bike trail for mountain bikers, which is located outside the scenic loop.

Mary Jo stated currently 80% of Red Rock is fee-free; this will be analyzed.

There was a suggestion of creating a foundation with RRCIA and FORRC; this way funds may be more easily attained.

The Business Plan is being updated to ensure it contains accurate financial information, and is easily understood by the public once it is released in early 2009.

A question was asked referencing the number of local visitors vs. out-of-state. Mary Jo and Kirsten stated that currently this information is not being tracked.

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Proposed Fee Adjustment – (2 sites, Bird Creek Recreation Area and White River Campground)

Joshua T. Simpson from the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest introduced himself and the topic to the committee.

Joshua explained the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest operates 11 campgrounds and 5 group picnic areas under the fee authority provided by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA). Current group fees are \$35 to \$65, depending on group size.

In 2005 the Timber Creek Campground water system was rebuilt. During the construction period camping was not allowed in the campground, instead overnight camping was directed to East Creek, Berry Creek, and Bird Creek Picnic Area. Since then there has been an expressed desire to keep overnight camping at some of the sites in the Bird Creek Recreation Area (currently there is no overnight camping allowed; only day-use and sites are available via reservation). The proposal would authorize overnight single family camping for \$8 per night at four of the individual picnic units within the area; this fee would be the same as that charged at Timber Creek Campground.

The proposal for the second fee site, White River Campground, would remove White River Campground from the Recreation Fee System.

The proposal includes the removal of outhouses, fee tube and garbage services from the area making it a non-fee dispersed camping area.

Since 2004, when the campground was incorporated into the Recreation Fee System, the revenues generated have been minimal and are not sufficient to reduce the growing backlog of deferred maintenance. As a result, facilities have degraded to a point that some form of action is needed.

Public Involvement

Several steps to provide opportunities for comment on the proposals have been created.

- Information explaining these proposals and inviting comment was posted at all developed recreation sites on the Ely Ranger District from June 5 through September 5, 2008.

- This information has also been published once a month in the local Ely newspaper during this period.
- Information letters were sent to the Congressional Delegation
- The proposals were presented to the White Pine County Commission and Public Land Use Advisory Commission.

Q & A

There was a concern of addressing human waste cleanup if the toilet facilities were to be removed. Joshua explained two toilets will be left in place.

Joshua noted Bird Creek is the only campground in the area with trash cans; there have not been too many issues this year dealing with campground trash.

Deferred maintenance backlog was defined and explained (broken windows, doors, old toilet systems, etc.)

Scott explained the “numbers” for each facility are revisited at least every 5 years. These numbers include deferred maintenance.

The intent of these programs is to generate dollars to improve facilities.

6 votes were received attaining majority consensus for this proposal.

The next step is the presentation to the Northeast Great Basin RAC. A letter of recommendation will be mailed by the Northeastern Great Basin RAC to the Regional Forester in Ogden, UT.

California National Historic Trail Interpretive Center – Elko District

Ken Miller, District Manager for Elko District office introduced himself and the topic to the team.

Ken stated, as the Center’s Interpretive Design Plan is implemented over the next several years, the 16,000 sq. foot structure, Interpretive Plaza, and 40 acre site will blossom into a unique environment that will inspire visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

Visitors will have the opportunity to experience multimedia exhibits, life size dioramas, and video productions. They will be able to hike the trails, attend interpretive programs, and speak with knowledgeable staff. For this experience they will gain an understanding of what is one of the most formative events in American history; Westward expansion. An understanding of how these emigrants contributed to the development of America, the American character, and the

American identity will foster a sense of stewardship towards preserving historic and cultural resources for them and inspiration of future generations.

Partner Contributions:

- Elko County \$1 million
- City of Elko \$2 million
- State of NV \$3.4 million
- Federal HWY..... \$1.73 million
- BLM \$6.69 million
- Total \$13.8 Million

Time Line

- October 2008 – Public Briefings begin
- November 2008 – District Manager, Ken Miller makes presentation at the RAC outlining the public involvement process.
- November 2008 – The Trail Center Business Plan is complete and approved by Elko District Manager, Ken Miller.
- August 2009 Formal public involvement process begins to address options associated with establishing the Trail Center as a fee site.
- September 2009 – Implement outreach plan to inform public about fees, issue and begin compiling public comments.
- October 2009 – BLM/Elko District Office with assistance of WO and NSO will review public comments and update Business Plan.
- November 2009 – Recreation Resources Advisory Council reviews public comments and proposal and makes recommendation on fee site options.
- June 2010 – Decision to establish or not to establish the California Trail Center established as a fee site.
- October 2011 – Fee comparability study begins.
- March 2012 – California Trail Center Standard Amenity fee Plan approved by Recreation Resource Advisory Council.
- June 2012 – Fees collection plan executed at California Trail Center.

The elephant in the lobby originates historically from the phrase “I have seen the elephant” meaning the emigrants have experienced things that could not be easily explained. This 10 foot brass Sculpture is being finished in Oregon, and is expected to be delivered January 2009. It was funded by a very generous donation.

Outreach plan

- Web site
 - Business plan posted on Elko district website
 - E-mail comments compiled
 - News releases direct public to website to make comments
 - News releases, flyers, and notices of public meetings and events posted on website
- Hard copies of Business Plan available at the Elko District Office, at the California Trail Center and at all activities hosted or attended by California Trail Center Staff
- New releases issued statewide
- Posters & Flyers of public meeting widely distributed in Elko County
 - Northeast Nevada Museum
 - Western Folklore Center
 - Elko Visitor Convention and Visitor Authority
 - Post offices in Elko, Spring Creek, Carlin, Jackpot, Wendover
- Interested parties and groups
 - Elko city council
 - Elko county board of Commissioners
 - Elko County Marketing Committee
 - California Trail Advisory Council
 - Humboldt High Road
 - California Trail Center Volunteers
- Public Meeting May 2009

Q & A

- It was noted this center will have huge historical contribution to the west.
- Structures and displays are not addressed in the Business Plan because it was created to address operations only.
- A room rental arrangement was addressed. Room rental is being envisioned. Concessionaires are different, therefore addressed differently; this is not being looked at and is not in the plan.
- \$650 thousand dollars are being projected for annual operations. Budget would come from appropriations, foundations, partnerships, gift shop, fee collection, etc. These items need to be further explored and view at different options that may assist with the ops.

Ken will provide the group with supporting materials such as blue prints to give a more in-detail information to the group.

Next Steps in the Process – Develop Presentations to RAC

- During Friday's meeting Vince Garcia and Doran Sanchez will present the Forest Service proposals to the Northeastern Great Basin RAC. At the end of the meeting a letter will be drafted from the RAC providing the final recommendation endorsing the support (if approved) to the Regional Forester for Region 4.
- A larger overview of the projects and effects would be beneficial in order to make more educated comments. We need to be transparent.
- The public commented on having more information available on fee process as far as demonstrating implementation of fee collections.
- We need to learn to take advantage of volunteer enthusiasm when available.
- We need to be engaged. Partnerships are great, but establishing and maintaining these relationships can be exhausting for both partners and BLM. We need to acknowledge ultimately running these facilities is our responsibility.
- While developing a Business Plan we should look at the competition levels (Private vs. Public situations).
- Amenity-based system to determine fees was discussed. The location of these amenities based on the areas that are fee-based was addressed. There should be a ratio of area covered by these amenities.

Public Comments

Kitty Benzar, President of the Western Slope No Fee Coalition, introduced herself and provided comments regarding the public comment structure of this group.

The following items were also brought up and discussed:

- Public comment should occur before proposals are voted on.
- FLREA requires the RecRAC to elect a chairperson also the Chair must approve the minutes per the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Criticism of other RecRACs has included delay in approving and publishing minutes.
- "Side of the road" fees are not allowed but are happening in other areas, something to watch for at Red Rocks
- Entrance fees not allowed, sign at Red Rocks says Entrance Fee
- Budget for RecRAC meetings is about \$50k per each.

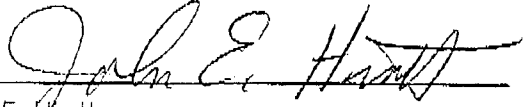
- RecRAC pre-approval of fee proposals up to a certain threshold would violate the spirit of the FLREA that was to bring public participation into the process to address the complaints about Fee Demo not including the public.
- Special Recreation Permits are being used by BLM for fees they want to charge that don't fit SAF or EAF requirements.
- It's all about ownership. If someone can charge me to hike on a trail, I don't own it any more, the person who is charging me does. Public is being shut out of public lands by fees.
- Retention of revenues is the reason we're getting this proliferation of fees. If the agencies can keep all the money, they will collect more and more. FLREA says they can keep at least 80%, most claim to be keeping 95%. But retention can reduce to 60% if revenue exceeds reasonable needs. GAO found 75% of BLM sites had unobligated balances (excess revenue), 46% had balances exceeding a year's revenue. \$300 million total unobligated balance for all agencies.
- Administrative, overhead, and indirect costs cannot exceed 15% of fee revenue. At Red Rocks overhead exceeded 27% at last report for cost of collection alone, not including costs like RecRAC meetings and management. Oregon Trail Interp Center last reported 40% Cost of Collection.
- Fees were supposed to be for deferred maintenance but they have mostly gone for staff and day to day operations. FS does not have a way to track deferred maintenance per GAO so they have no idea what it is or what effect fees have had on it.
- Red Rocks has 54 staff for 13 scenic miles. The proposal calls for a fee increase without justifying it. A solution in search of a problem.
- Congress has stated a commitment to free public access and has increased funding to pay for it, yet money to the ground keeps decreasing. 45-60% of FS approps never make it to the ground on a National Forest.
- A time of economic hardship is not the right time to add to the financial burden of people who want to visit their public lands.
- Humboldt-Toiyabe NF has 32 new fee sites in their recreation plan, 26% of all their developed sites.
- Reservation fees are split 50% to Ticketmaster, 40% to DC admin, 10% to a pool for National Forests to share.
- Nevada RAC/RecRAC info on national site is years out of date.

Another public commentator requested not to be charged on recreating on Public land.

Amy concluded by stating great feedback and information has been received that will allow for better decision making in the future.

There is a scheduled Welcome reception for RAC members this evening. The RAC will reconvene tomorrow at 8:00am.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30pm.



John E. Hiatt
NV RAC Recreation Subcommittee Chairperson



Date

Chairperson's signature indicates minutes have been read and approved by the Subcommittee

AGENDA
NEVADA RAC RECREATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 12, 2008
LAS VEGAS, NV

Gold Coast Hotel and Casino, Salon C, 4000 W. Flamingo Blvd, Las Vegas, NV

12:30 p.m.	Welcome and Introductions	Amy Lueders, BLM NV Associate State Director; Stephanie Phillips, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest and Doran Sanchez, BLM NV Chief of Communications
1:00 p.m.	Review Protocol and Guidelines	Scott Lamoreux Barb Keleher
1:30 p.m.	Presentation on Proposed Public Involvement Process for Potential Fee Adjustment at Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area	Mary Jo Rugwell, District Manager BLM Southern Nevada District Office
2:00 p.m.	Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest Proposed Fee Adjustments – 2 sites Bird Creek Recreation Area and White River Campground	Joshua T. Simpson Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
2:45	Break	
3:00	BLM - CA Trail Center Fee Determination Process and Timeline Discussion	Ken Miller, District Manager BLM Elko District Office
3:30	Next Steps in the Process – Develop Presentations to RAC	Group Discussion
4:00	Public Comments	Doran Sanchez
4:30 p.m.	Adjourn	